



## ***Gospel Seeds - April 2019***

**A Monthly Update from Western ND Synod Staff**

### **“The Kingdom of God is like...”**

Above is the theme we will gather around for this year’s synod assembly. It is intended to help us imagine our way into where God is calling us as individuals, as congregations and as a synod together.

Jesus uses this line numerous times in the Gospels – as the opening of a variety of parables. It seems that Jesus is trying to help people understand what Kingdom looks like. Why? I think because he is inviting us to keep our eyes open for it.

Kingdom might be a word which is hard to relate to for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Americans. We do not live under a king. So, for some, replacing the word “kingdom” for “reign” of God or “rule” of God helps us connect the concept with our modern day lives. So where do we see the Kingdom, Reign or Rule of God? Wherever God’s will is done.

So, God’s Kingdom is most certainly in the future in heaven. But it also comes in glimpses in this world when followers of the risen Christ serve their neighbor with love, grace and mercy. It happens when the hungry are fed, the stranger is shown love, those in prison are visited and much more.

In mid-April, registration for synod assembly will open. Every rostered minister of the synod is required to be at assembly. Every congregation is allowed to bring at least 2 voting members to assembly – watch the registration material where you will see that larger congregations are able to bring more voting members based on their membership. There is also an option to come as a visitor, which is explained in the registration material.

Synod Assembly really is a faith formation event. We will gather for worship, engage in Bible Study, hear about creative and Christ-centered ministries in our synod and beyond. You will get the opportunity to ask questions of other congregational leaders to help build faith in Christ within your congregation.

This year our churchwide guest is Rev. Phil Hirsch the new Executive Director of the ELCA Domestic Mission Unit. We look forward to seeing you.

***Synod Assembly – June 7-8, 2019 – Grand Hotel, Minot***

***Pre-Assembly Workshop – June 6 – Grand Hotel, Minot***

***Mission Gala – Thursday Evening June 6 – Christ Lutheran, Minot***

### **Synod Assembly Offering Challenge...**

It was two years ago that the Synod Assembly approved adding a third leg to Western North Dakota Endowment Fund. That fund is called the Accompaniment Fund. Earnings from the fund will help ensure there are staff available to walk with those considering a call to ministry and staff available to walk with congregations in discerning what Christ-centered ministry they are called to engage.

To help “seed” this new leg of the Endowment Fund, a special offering will be taken during opening worship at synod assembly. One congregation in each of the seven conferences have agreed to bring \$2,500 to \$5,000 in offering. Those congregations are: Oak Valley, Velva – Faith, Bismarck – Good Shepherd, Bismarck – St. John, Dickinson – First, Williston – Prairie Lutheran Parish, Stanley and First, Minot. I am thankful to these congregations.

In addition, the leaders of these congregations have agreed to encourage at least seven other congregations in their conference to bring \$250 to \$500 for this special offering. Here is where you all come in – if you have not talked about this yet in your congregation, I ask that you engage it now. You have an opportunity to help provide additional resources which will serve your congregation well into the future.

Thanks in advance for your generosity. We are blessed to be in ministry together.

### **Discernment Events...**

The Spring Assignment of Seminary Graduates has come and gone. In that process one person was assigned to our synod. We are thankful for the gift this person brings and we shall see what happens for them in the call process. The Spring Assignment Process showed again the deep divide between the number of candidates needed and the number available. There are no signs that this will change any time soon – we need more rostered leaders!

With that in mind we continue to provide discernment events. Here are a couple that will be taking place in the coming months:

- May 31-June 1<sup>st</sup>: Discernment Retreat for Senior High Youth
- June 21<sup>st</sup>, 6:30 -8:30 PM, Synod Office: Discernment Dinner

*God Bless All!*

Mark Narum

Serving as Bishop of the Western North Dakota Synod



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.